

FAIRTRADE TOOLKIT



THE POWER OF BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT AND THE FACE TO FACE APPROACH

In 2019, with the assistance of Live Fair European Funding, a partnership of organisations in the City of Bristol UK hosted a visit from a Fairtrade coffee producer with the aim to engage more business interest in Fairtrade procurement.

Bristol – as a Fairtrade city – has had many visits from producers but these have always focused on school visits with payments from the schools funding the visit. Bristol Fair Trade Network had identified the benefits of business engagement as a way to have greater impact with each business than influencing its supply chain, customers and staff. We entitled the project Face to Face as the key was to get the producer Face to Face with businesses in the city.

We want to share our experience with as wide an audience as possible to assist you in replicating this work in some way to help promote Fairtrade in your area influence.



INTRODUCTION

This toolkit has been developed as part of Bristol's Fairtrade producer visit in November 2019. Within this toolkit the indicative example that will be used is coffee – it's simple and everyone knows about it. Bristol's Fairtrade producer was a member of the SOPPEXXCA co-operative in Nicaragua.

Engaging businesses in Fairtrade is a key part of the success of more Fairtrade products being sold. However, they can be tricky to engage with and persuade that trying Fairtrade, or buying Fairtrade, is a fair and ethical way forward.

Businesses have many constraints from customer preference, cost, and existing contracts and suppliers, etc. It is not uncommon for those who haven't used Fairtrade products for a while to equate them as ethically produced but not always meeting quality requirements. This (particularly with the first Fairtrade coffee) was possibly true but it certainly isn't any more - Fairtrade coffee is as every bit delicious its non-Fairtrade counterparts and it has an enviable ethical record!

What can really make a difference to sales is to see, first hand, the impact of the Fairtrade certification. In reality, one roasted coffee bean looks pretty similar to another; a Fairtrade coffee bean doesn't wear a halo or is individually stamped. Similarly, unless someone knows their coffee is Fairtrade, they won't be able to ascertain that from the taste. Hearing first-hand information and experience directly from a producer who can give real examples of how climate change is affecting their crops, how the Fairtrade premium has affected their and their community's lives, etc can be truly inspiring.

NOTE: All of this is based on an in person visit – and none of us know when this will be realistic again. However all can be replicated in a virtual visit and all lessons and advice still apply. A virtual visit may also make the event more attainable if budgets are tight. But do remember that reduced costs do not mean no costs. The producer will still have costs to cover their time lost in the field and possible costs travelling to a suitable location for the virtual events. These needed to be budgeted for.

1. WHY DO A FAIRTRADE PRODUCER-TO-BUSINESS VISIT

Producer visits are often targeted at young people and producers are regularly taken to schools and universities to talk to students. However, it is not that common for producers to be taken to engage with businesses; potentially the real driving force behind an increase in Fairtrade sales.

Children may pester their parents to buy Fairtrade bananas, for example, after hearing a producer. However, the person ultimately buying the product is usually the parent and it is the parent who will buy from business selling Fairtrade products. It makes sense, therefore, to encourage businesses to sell Fairtrade products using the influence that meeting a producer can bring.



2. STEERING GROUP

Having a small steering group of between three and five people means that the workload is shared. Each person can bring a different skill to the group so make sure your group is made up of people with a range of skills. In Bristol, we had the following:

- Someone to liaise with the producer co-operative in Nicaragua sorting out dates and travel requirements (such as passports)
- Another group member overseeing the project and undertaking the financial management;

- A third assisting with arrangements and liaising with the Council
- Someone setting the itinerary and arranging visits.
- Ensure that you have someone who can attend all the events and take pictures – these will be very important in follow up work and to get media attention.
- Part of setting up the steering group is being realistic as to how much time people have and how long it will take to make arrangements. The planning the visit and reflection phases always take longer than you first think!

Factor in the probable need for an interpreter as well; consider what skills an interpreter will need such as will they have to make sure the producer gets to events, are different dialects an issue, etc Do you have someone in mind and who is available. They become a core member of the team immediately prior to and during the producer visit.

Involve them as much as possible to ensure that they are fully up to speed on what is required, where they and the producer need to be at any time, and any special requirements.



3. PRODUCER VISIT FUNDING

Make sure your budget (and any funding application) is sufficient to cover the costs of a visit. Costs will include travel for the producer (flight and visa costs), event space hire, at least one group evening meal, external support (if needed), interpreter costs and other miscellaneous costs. A nominated member of the steering group should be in charge of the budget and financial management at all times. Ensure that you have detailed discussions in advance to identify all likely spending needs.



4. POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Decide if you need political engagement or not, whether that is at a local or national level. If your town or city holds Fairtrade status then local politicians would have usually been involved in obtaining that. Keep them involved in the visit; the chances are they might not have met a Fairtrade producer before and will be very interested in what they have to say. If you have a national politician whose brief or interest is in trade, international development, equalities, etc then consider involving them if you can if their schedule permits. Be aware of their priorities and don't assume that just because they are interested that they will be able to participate. One of the UK MPs, based in Bristol, who strongly supports this agenda was unable to engage due to the much more pressing issue of Brexit!

Politicians can be influential in promoting the Fairtrade cause if they have a strong interest in it. However, you don't want them to take over the visit so decide how much input you would like them to have and steer them in the right direction.

5. PRESS COVERAGE

Press coverage will help to spread the message of business support for Fairtrade but it is not always easy to get the attention of reporters.



WHAT TO DO

- Plan in advance to get press attention.
- Ensure that you have a contact list for local media and tell them before hand of the visit.
- Think which events may be most likely to get picked up by media – can you add anything to the event to do this. A good picture is always a big help.
- If you have got agreement from politicians to attend any event focus on these for media coverage – the media and the politician will be your allies.
- It has been mentioned above but ensure that you always have someone present who can focus solely on getting the right pictures - with the right people.
- It is worth remembering that local business networks also have their own regular internal newsletters, digital mailouts and website news and these should also be included in your press releases.

6. TIMING

TIMING IS CRUCIAL AND IT FALLS INTO TWO MAIN AREAS; FIRSTLY, TIMING FOR THE HOST CITY AND, SECONDLY, TIMING FOR THE PRODUCER.

6.1 Timing for the host city

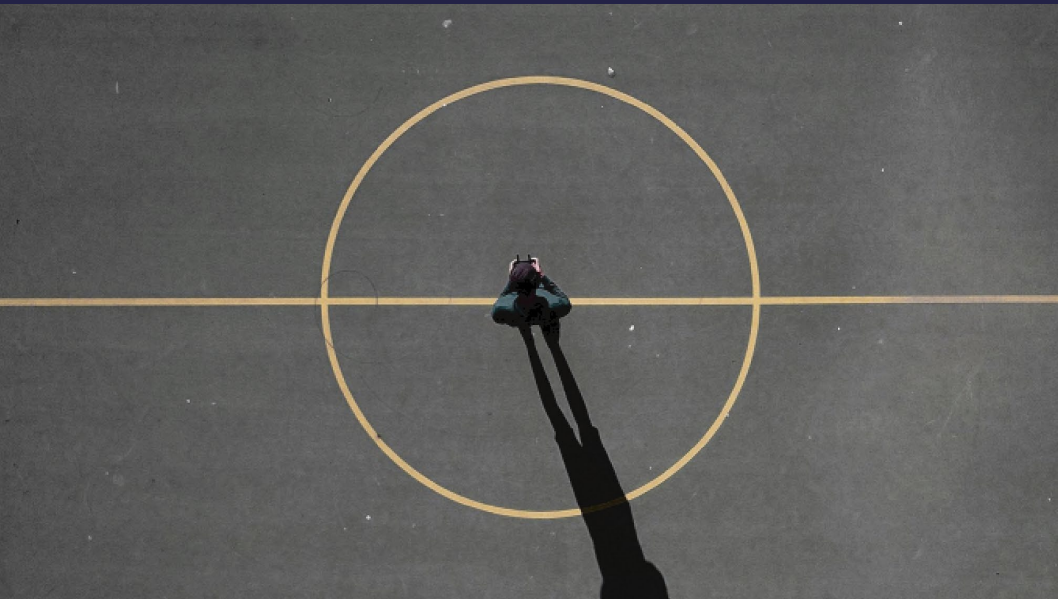
Who do you want the producer to see and how many businesses are you targeting? In Bristol, the producer was available for seven working days and there was a balance to 'use' her as much as possible but, at the same time, not to exhaust her. Consider what other business events are happening in your city that they can partake in. The timing for the producer visit to Bristol was scheduled to deliberately coincide with a conference on public sector procurement and climate change. This existing event was a perfect vehicle for the producer as there were public sector procurers, businesses and policy makers in the audience. The producer focused her presentation on the impacts of climate change on coffee production as well as the benefits of Fairtrade certification.

6.2 Timing for the producer

Once a suitable producer has been identified, travel documentation is required so leave ample time for this to be arranged. It is possible that the producer does not have a passport and so will need one to travel; they will also probably need a visa. These can take quite a long time to apply for and obtain and if the producer needs to go to a major city to present them in person or collect them, factor in that time when setting the date for the visit. In Bristol we have an existing formal link with Nicaragua through BLINC. Through their representative in Nicaragua, they were able to assist obtaining travel documentation and speed up the process.

If you are able to do so and if the timing works out, try and make sure that the producer visit is not in winter! Bristol always seems to have producer visits in winter and the unfortunate producer spends most of their time wrapped in a big coat with cold feet. This might seem a minor point but if they have to buy clothes especially for a ten day visit, it can make expensive for them.

The Bristol producer had a visit to a community farm where Wellington boots were definitely needed!



7. TYPE OF PRODUCER

Crucial to the success of a producer visit is the producer themselves and this needs careful consideration. Points to consider are:

- What type of producer; eg coffee, cacao, nuts, bananas, etc?
Bristol usually has a Nicaraguan coffee producer because of the excellent relationship with BLINC but in the past Bristol has had a cashew nut producer, a sesame producer, etc visit the City.
- If they are bringing samples with them, what are the allergy implications (another reason why Bristol usually has a coffee producer rather than nut producers)?
- If your city has a link with a place or a twinned city, it makes sense for a producer to come from there and that will also define where they come from (eg, part of the world) and what they produce
- Is the selected producer representative of their producer group or co-operative?

- Are they willing and comfortable to travel?
- Are they happy to do presentations at a wide range of events, for example, from a conference with over one hundred people to meeting a coffee shop owner?
- Are they engaging? Bear in mind that they will usually be presenting through an interpreter; however, they will still need to have a spark to make the audience want to listen and learn more.
- Are they happy to stay with a host family?

The success of the choice of producer is whether they take the visit in their stride and so make a lasting and positive impression on the people they meet during their visit.

8. WHO DO YOU WANT THE PRODUCER TO MEET?

As this is a producer visit to businesses, the key audience is businesses but what type do you want them to meet? Also consider whether it is the owner of the business or staff; who is going to have the most influence over what is sold, and who will actually be doing the selling in those business and so can inform and get customers on board (eg, baristas in coffee shops).



Every city has a range of networks that can be tapped into and sometimes the useful ones are not the obvious, so do think beyond the 'usual suspects'. For example, in Bristol we were able to take advantage of the Visit Bristol tourism network to arrange for the producer to meet some of their members. The Bristol producer also visited a group of catering students at the local college. Whilst this was a business visit, those catering students will find employment in businesses when they leave college enabling them to take Fairtrade and sustainability knowledge into their future employment.

At the time of the Bristol producer visit, Bristol was aiming to achieve a Gold award from Sustainable Food Places and Fairtrade formed part of that initiative. In arranging events for the producer we were able to link in closely with what was happening there.

The key for maximum impact is to target businesses who might not normally think of using or stocking Fairtrade products. In Bristol, we held a breakfast event at the offices of a multi-national engineering firm and although they had a central buying contract for (non-Fairtrade) coffee, they were considering buying Fairtrade coffee for their office in Bristol after they heard the producer speak about the ethical and environment benefits of Fairtrade production.

Don't ignore existing Fairtrade supporting businesses during the producer visit; reinforcing key Fairtrade messages from a producer in person ensures that the bonds remain strong. In addition, whilst businesses might stock or sell Fairtrade products, they are likely to welcome the opportunity to meet a producer, particularly if they have not done so before.

9. TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT AND EVENTS

Consider a range of engagement activities to reach a maximum number of people as possible in a short period of time. Hopefully the events will also be of interest to the producer and they can learn something in return. This can have the added advantage that the focus isn't always on the producer as that can be very tiring. It also useful to consider the timing of events; for example, don't arrange an evening meeting when the producer is already scheduled for a breakfast or early morning event. The temptation is to fill the diary but be aware of energy levels of both the producer and the interpreter.



Types of interactions can include speaking at a relevant conference, network meetings, business breakfast meetings, one-to-one with a business, knowledge exchange visit with a farm, etc. Bristol had a target number of businesses for their producer to meet but, in reality, it should be quality and impact created rather than the number of businesses addressed.

The producer will be telling the various audiences a great deal about their life, so factor in some time for them to learn about you and your city etc. If the weather is nice, perhaps an afternoon tour on an open top sight-seeing bus can give them a real flavour of a city and an opportunity to

relax. Bristol has a premier league rugby team; the producer's host family were going to the home match the weekend the producer was staying with them so they took her to the match as well. Apparently she thoroughly enjoyed it!

It is always nice to be able to relax with the producer possibly over an evening meal. Bristol hosted such a meal at a small restaurant whose owners are very strong supporters of Fairtrade and were interested in meeting the producer.

10. POST PRODUCER VISIT

As tempting as it is to relax and think the visit is over, it is crucial to undertake a post-visit review and reflect and record lessons learnt. If the visit has been funded by an external source you will need to complete the relevant documentation that is required by the funder including reconciling the budget and the actual spend.

11. OTHER PARTNERS

Bristol took the opportunity to work with two twin city partners on the project and included them for part of the visit. The funding did require cross-boarder work and the finding allowed for this, but it was of benefit and enhanced the work. Having officials from other cities visit to be included in the project raises the status and demonstrates to businesses and politicians that ethics in supply chains is considered of high value.

You could liaise with your twinning association and see what can be arranged and maybe linked with another visit. You do need to ensure that those visiting have an interest in and understanding of sustainable supply chains and procurement to ensure that true shared learning can be achieved.

Most of all – enjoy the producer's visit and make sure they do to! It is a unique and uplifting opportunity to share cultural differences and similarities

Appendices:

Knowledge sharing with Hannover and Bordeaux

Planner templates for the detail of a visit including scheduling.

Key contacts in your area (to be tailored for each type of recipient).

Business analysis and updates



12. BRISTOL'S LESSONS LEARNT

Be aware of the comfort zone of the producer. One of the most successful events that was arranged was that to The Community Farm just outside Bristol. The producer met the workers and volunteers at the Farm and they were able to exchange experiences and practices and learn from each other.

Follow up thoroughly from visits to see what impact the producer has had on the audience for a particular event.

Link in to other events that are happening in your city or town during the producer visit. For example, Bristol used the procurement conference to highlight Fairtrade to approximately 100 businesses and policy makers who had an interest in climate change. Whilst this was not, on the surface, directly Fairtrade related, climate change is having (and will continue to have) a major impact on coffee production.

Producer visits are usually done on a limited budget. Use networks to arrange events, and not just the ones you usually use for Fairtrade to engage with businesses. Remember, this is a business producer visit so make use of the business networks. In hindsight, Bristol probably didn't utilise all the networks that they could have.

Spread out the events and meetings so that energy and enthusiasm can remain high; allow breaks and time off for the producer. There is a tendency to fit as many events in but remember the producer is human!

Don't forget the interpreter! They have an equally difficult task which, although it probably does get a bit easier as the visit progresses, it is still very tiring for them. Whatever events the producer is doing, so is the interpreter; they also need a break.

Bribe with cake if necessary - a Fairtrade coffee and cake session usually attracts a lot of people!

Don't be disappointed if not all the events you plan have a high attendance; some will work well, some won't. Sometimes those events with a low attendance actually allow for greater interaction due to the lower numbers.

Promote the producer visit across the city. Bristol didn't get mainstream media involved and, in hindsight, that was an omission.

Consider the time of year that you are planning a visit. If your producer is coming from a usually warm country, Northern European winters are a shock!

Look for the unexpected successes. In Bristol, three stand out. The potential for the engineering firm to start using Fairtrade products. One of the female catering students who heard our female producer's presentation and felt very strongly empowered afterwards. That student will be a Fairtrade advocate for life.

The café in City Hall – part of a larger chain – commenced looking at suppliers who could provide FairTrade certified coffee. This followed hosting a coffee morning with the producer and having detailed discussions about coffee production. The human connection made the difference.

CONTACTS

Hopefully we have inspired you to organise your own FairTrade producer visit to engage businesses in your area . But if you have any further questions or would like to discuss your plans don't hesitate to contact chair@bristolfairtrade.org.uk

OUR PARTNERSHIPS

Bristol Fair Trade Network brings together local people, businesses and organisations in support of small-scale farmers and workers across the globe under the Fair Trade system.

Our vision is of a city that recognises and celebrates the transformative power of Fair Trade, comes together to demand better availability of Fair Trade in its shops and

services, and so uses its collective voice and buying power to give farmers and workers around the world a better deal.

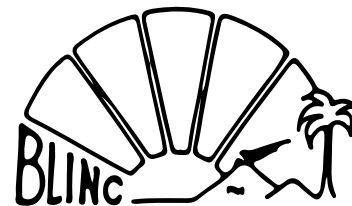
This project was a partnership between **Bristol Fair Trade** and **Blinc** supported by **The European Union Trade Fair Live Fair** and **Bristol City Council**. (Note – Trade Fair Live Fair is the EU funded programme that funded this – not a separate organisation).

www.bristolfairtrade.org.uk

www.bristolnicaragua.wordpress.com



Co-funded by the European Union



APPENDICES:

1A KNOWLEDGE SHARING WITH HANNOVER AND BORDEAUX

Thanks to the EU funding and Bristol City Council support we were able to host two officers from Hannover City Council's Local Agenda 21 team and Bordeaux City Council's head of Food Governance from their Energy, Ecology and Sustainable development department.

The officers took part in a three day programme of meetings with counterparts, public events, a regional conference and a half day workshop sharing best practice.

Our international colleagues each gave presentations outlining a range of programmes, campaigns and initiatives they had introduced to their own cities.

They also shared a selection of Fairtrade products which their authority had produced to promote different initiatives to the public including games, sports equipment and booklets.

Our Hannover colleagues reminded us that Bristol had played a key advisory role when Hannover had developed its successful bid to become a Fairtrade City a few years ago.

Both cities were looking to develop their approach and collaboration with business networks and viewed the Fairtrade Producer initiative as an important element to this.

It is important to say here that Bristol has been twinned with a Nicaraguan town since 1989 and the development of the Nicaraguan Fairtrade Producer programme grew out of this twinning.



Involving twin city partners in this work not only helped with funding but increased the range and scope of the project including informing MEPs.

Of course you do not just have to work with your twin cities but can develop an international element to the project with other partners.



Bordeaux & Hannover Knowledge Sharing Session

www.goingforgoldbristol.co.uk [#goingforgoldbristol](https://twitter.com/goingforgoldbristol)

APPENDICES:

1B STAKEHOLDER CONTACT LIST

MPs	https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP	Your area may have more than one MP .
Councillors	www.gov.uk/find-your-local-councillors	If your area is large with a number of councillors look for one with a key responsibility for business and or food and any who have expressed a particular interest in Climate Change issues.
Local Media	Click link below https://resources.journalink.com/instant-media-requests/?gclid=CjwKCAjwq9mLBhB2EiwAuYdMtTi_6HNsriZ-7BFpX--eB0bCjEl90MACeq5skYt2vhG3cZ_4W14CwhoCscoQAvD_BwE	This will just be a basic google exercise to start but make sure you look for the alternative media which focuses on key groups such as black owned businesses. The link given here may be useful to pick up on specific stories that are being sought by journalists.
Local Business Networks	www.fsb.org.uk/	<p>These two are the obvious candidates and the traditional business networks. However it is important to also look for alternatives also in your area. These may be specialist networks for women, black owned businesses, sustainability focused business etc.</p> <p>Your local council may be able to help via the Economic support team, Business development team or team focussing on High St support. These council teams may also be willing to promote your events via their networks and maybe host.</p>
Local Food Networks	www.britishchambers.org.uk	
Any Local Green Groups	Local Council, google, your own networks.	
Catering Colleges / Colleges of FE with Catering Courses	Groups campaigning around Climate Change and environmental issues are not always aware of the links with Fair Trade. Make contact and explain the issues and they may be able to host an event and promote to businesses.	Students are the employees / business owners of the future and could influence future supply chains.

APPENDICES:

1C SUGGESTED BUSINESS FOLLOW UP

Tell the businesses when they are attending the events that you will be conducting a follow up – give them and approximate time scale and what format it will take. They will appreciate this courtesy and will inspire confidence.

If you have the resource it will be more beneficial to start by calling businesses (rather than just emailing) to arrange a time to talk the questionnaire through with them and complete during that discussion. This will help to further forge the relationship with the business and maybe reignite any engagement you achieved at the event. It will also offer an opportunity to offer advice on overcoming any barriers they are encountering.

Name of Business:

Contact details:

Name and Date of event attended:

1. What prompted you to attend the event?
2. What did hope to learn at / gain from the event?
3. What did you learn at / gain from the event?
4. Have you introduced / plan to introduce any changes in your supply chain / business offering since attending the event?
5. What barriers have your encountered when trying to / considering introducing changes?
6. If you have introduced changes what benefits have you seen to your business since doing this

In addition you can ask if they would recommend these events to other businesses if you arranged another producer visit in the future.

When you have received as many responses as you think you can reasonably obtain do an analysis on factors such as:

- How many (or percentage) changed their practices.
- How many (or percentage) benefited.
- How many (or percentage) are planning to change.
- What barriers were over come and how.
- What barriers are still being worked on (better to be realistic – they will respect the honesty).

THEN: Feedback to the businesses – provide a report showing how many attended and all the outcomes. Celebrate the impact and what has changed. This will help to keep the message alive and promote a sense of being part of something good. Feedback also to the contacts at the networks who supported you/ promoted the events.

APPENDICES:

1D PLANNING TEMPLATE

Suggested style plan for the visit phase

Date	Time	Event	Actions	Owner	Other participants	Key reminders	Who is transporting producer to next event / home ad time deadline for leaving	Notes
xx/xx/xxxx	0:00	Producer Arrival	Get flight no /arrival time. Arrange parking Send producer details for meeting.	xx		Flight Details Visa clearance details	xx/00:00	1*
xx/xx/xxxx	0:00	Farm Visit		xx		Remind all wellingtons needed Who has wellingtons to lend to producer?	xx/00:00	2*
xx/xx/xxxx	0:00	City Hall Coffee morning	1) Liaise with xx on provisions for the day. 2) Liaise with City Hall comms team to promote event. 3) Liaise with staff groups to promote event.	xx		Who in team will be baking cakes Signs for allergy alerts	xx/00:00	
xx/xx/xxxx	0:00	Farm Visit		xx		Collect banner from City Hall	xx/00:00	

1* The planning phase will need its own schedule. Ensure one person in the team controls this. Use this as your agenda at all planning meeting to ensure that a track is being kept of all actions and everyone is aware of all dependencies.

2* We won't suggest a tool to use to keep track - it may be Microsoft Project software or a notebook and pencil. It does not matter as long as it works for you and everyone is very clear on what, who, when.